

Decision 02-05-030 May 16, 2002

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

David L. Gordon,

Complainant,

vs.

Southern California Edison Company,

Defendant.

(ECP)

Case 01-09-035

(Filed September 13, 2001)

David Gordon, for himself, complainant,
P. Aldridge, for Southern California
Edison, Co. (SCE), defendant.

OPINION DENYING RELIEF

David L. Gordon (complainant), alleges that Southern California Edison Company (SCE) overbilled him \$1,778.44 for electricity charges. SCE denied overbilling. Public hearing was held December 7, 2001 before Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Barnett.

Complainant testified that he co-owns an industrial building located at 650 Flotilla Street, Commerce, California. The building is approximately 178,000 square feet. His tenant moved out in the summer of 2000. He called SCE and asked that the building be put on "Clean and Show" service as the building was vacant. This means that it uses the minimum amount of power to keep the alarm system running and to allow real estate brokers to turn the lights on and off in

order to show the building. Starting August 22, 2000, extremely high bills were received, given the clean and show status. He called SCE to request explanations. SCE said that the bills reflected what the meter read. On October 24, 2001, complainant hired an electrician to examine the premises where the electrician found 16 step-down transformers. He deactivated 15 of them.

He testified that in late December 2000, the panel box (where the power comes into the building and where the meter is housed) exploded in a robbery attempt. The meter and the box were destroyed. The electricity was shut off. At the end of January 2001, a new temporary electric service was installed. He said the building had the same general usage in February, 2001 as it had in the period from August through December, 2000. The February bill on the new temporary service was \$12.24 per day instead of the \$30 to \$50 per day in the contested period. He believes \$12.24 per day is more reflective of reality. Applying \$12.24 per day to the period of August 22 to December 4, 2000 shows an overcharge of \$2,433.77. SCE gave him a credit of \$655.33, leaving a balance of \$1,778.44. He requests SCE refund that amount.

Defendant's witness testified that the premises had the potential connected load to have used the amount of electricity for which complainant was billed. There are 16 step-down transformers on the premises.

At the hearing it was agreed that an electrical engineer at SCE should inspect the premises to investigate the potential load. This was done on December 14, 2001, and SCE reported its results to complainant and the Commission. SCE's engineer, accompanied by a representative of complainant, found that 16 step-down transformers, of varying size, are located in the building. The step-down transformers were installed by a tenant three to four

years ago. When the tenant vacated the building in the summer of 2000, the electric service was put in complainant's name. At that time the transformers, though idle, were still energized. A step-down transformer that is energized will consume electricity even with no load connected to it. All 16 step-down transformers were still active or energized until October 24, 2000 when complainant hired an electrician to de-energize 15 of them. Those transformers would account for a large portion of the electricity used at the site until October 24th.

The charges being questioned occurred during the summer of 2000 and ended after October 24, 2000, when 15 step-down transformers were deactivated. The bill for February 2001 was low because only one transformer was activated. During the summer of 2000 complainant's premises had the connected load to cause the high bills. Therefore, the relief requested is denied.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. The relief requested is denied.
2. This proceeding is closed.

This order is effective today.

Dated May 16, 2002, at San Francisco, California.

LORETTA M. LYNCH
President
HENRY M. DUQUE
CARL W. WOOD
GEOFFREY F. BROWN
MICHAEL R. PEEVEY
Commissioners